



Crises in the Southern Caucasus: Cold War, Cold Peace or a New Beginning ?

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The Georgian attempt to regain control over the break away areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by use of military force has triggered a sequence of events of which the outcome is as yet unclear. The consequences of this crisis, however, reach well beyond Georgia's borders and fit the picture of a global order in transition towards multi-polarity. With a feeble cease fire agreement in place after weeks of international political turmoil and Cold War style rhetoric, it is time to take stock of the situation we find ourselves in and on how to move on.

The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic and what came next

Situated in the Caucasus region, Georgia's current territory coincides with that of the former Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). Within the Georgian SSR, Abkhazia held the separate status of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), whereas South Ossetia was an Autonomous *Oblast* (AO), an autonomous province. Save Georgia, the Caucasus comprises Armenia, Azerbaijan, southern parts of Russia and north eastern parts of Turkey. It is a mountainous region, a patchwork of ethnically diverse people and territories of the kind also found in other mountainous regions in the world, such as the Balkans, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many of these territories such as Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are disputed areas. Prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Georgian SSR terminated South Ossetia's status as an autonomous *oblast* in 1990.

Riots erupted in the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, and order was not restored until martial law was declared.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the international community including the Russian Federation, recognized Georgia's claim for independence within the boundaries of the former Georgian SSR. As a consequence Georgia inherited three potential break-away regions: Adjara¹, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Abkhaz and South Ossetian drive for independence has pre-Soviet roots and for that reason was neither new nor surprising². In the course of the Soviet Union's break up, both South Ossetia and Abkhazia claimed independence from Georgia. While Abkhazia got a limited autonomy within the new Georgian state, South Ossetia's claim for independence was to no avail and did not even result in a limited form of autonomy. A South Ossetian plebiscite, held in January 1992, in which the population overwhelmingly voted for secession from Georgia and becoming a part of the Russian Federation, was ignored when Russia and Georgia after fierce fighting between Georgian and separatist forces in and around Tskhinvali agreed on the 'Sochi ceasefire agreement' on 24 June 1992. Subsequently, and as a result of the Sochi agreement, Georgia, Russia, South-Ossetia and the Russian republic of North-Ossetia-Alania, supported by the OSCE³, established a Joint Control Commission to coordinate the Joint Peacekeeping Forces: a 1,500-strong peacekeeping force comprised of Russian, Georgian and Ossetian servicemen.

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After declaring independence in July 1992, Abkhazia fought an armed conflict with Georgian troops trying to gain control over the Abkhaz secessionists. Georgia suffered a humiliating military defeat and the majority of the Georgian population in Abkhazia, many of them victims of outright ethnic cleansing, fled to Georgia proper. While a small UN monitoring mission (UNOMIG) was established in Abkhazia in 1993⁴, approximately 1500 predominantly Russian peacekeepers deployed in Abkhazia under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), following a Russian brokered cease fire and separation of forces agreement in May 1994⁵.

Georgia never managed to effectively gain control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the break up of the Soviet Union, despite a number of diplomatic and military efforts to that end. While Russian support and machinations as well as despicable ethnic cleansing practices conducted by separatist fanatics⁶ certainly considerably affected this outcome, separatism would not have stood a chance without considerable Abkhaz popular support.

Raising tension and the outbreak of major hostilities

Regardless of the presence of UN and OSCE backed peacekeepers and numerous efforts to resolve the conflict by negotiations, tensions between Georgia and secessionist Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained high, with violent skirmishes occurring from time to time. Abkhazia and Georgia came to the brink of a new major armed conflict when Georgian police and security forces re-asserted control over the Kodori Gorge in 2006, after Abkhaz secessionists living in the area, in violation of the 1994 cease fire and separation of forces agreement, declared the area to be a part of 'independent' Abkhazia⁷.

Prior to the outbreak of the major hostilities in August 2008, both Russia and Georgia conducted military exercises that were scheduled well in advance of the conflict. No surprise the sheer occurrence of these exercises has been used for mutual accusations of war preparations. As both exercises were scheduled well in advance, such accusations will be hard to prove.

The Russian exercise, Kavkaz 2008, was a joint counter-terrorist exercise covering the Russian Caucasus and conducted by approximately 8,000 troops, 700 combat vehicles and 30 aircraft, including naval elements of the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla. According to a Russian military spokesman, Colonel Igor Konashenkov, the objective of Kavkaz 2008 was to evaluate the ability of the military command and civil authorities to jointly counter a terrorist threat in South Russia. In view of the recent increased tensions between Georgia and South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the exercise scenario was amended to train special peacekeeping operations as well. As the exercise ended on 02 August the Russian forces were in any case in a splendid position for a transition to real world operations on Georgian territory⁸.

The Georgian exercise, Immediate Response-2008, was conducted by a total of about 2000 Georgian and U.S. troops and augmented with military officers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. Immediate Response is a U.S. sponsored annual, bilateral exercise focusing on increasing interoperability and on conducting security operations between U.S. and

coalition partner forces. Immediate Response-2008 was conducted at the Vaziani training area near the Georgian capital Tbilisi. According to Minda Arabuli, a Georgian spokesman, Immediate Response-2008 had not been terminated at the outbreak of the conflict⁹. No surprise, Russian sources asserted that U.S. forces actively supported Georgian military operations against secessionist and Russian forces¹⁰.

The Georgian military assault on the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali started in the early hours of 08 August 2008. As reported by the OSCE mission's deputy head of mission Mr Ryan Grist, Georgia started amassing troops along the South Ossetian border three days prior to the outbreak of the conflict¹¹. Scores of incidents had taken place in the vicinity of Tskhinvali during the preceding months, including the exchange of artillery fire between Ossetian separatists and Georgian forces. What ultimately sparked off the Georgian assault against the South Ossetian Tskhinvali remains unclear, but unconfirmed information has it that a Russian military convoy was approaching the Roki tunnel, the only road connection between Russian North Ossetia and Georgian South Ossetia. Allegedly, South Ossetian separatist forces also began shelling Georgian villages earlier that evening. The Georgian military operation was conducted with tanks, aircraft and Grad rocket launchers fit to take on an army rather than a bunch of separatists operating from within an urban environment. Approximately 1,400 civilians and about 10 Russian peacekeepers were killed as a result of this disproportionate, indiscriminate Georgian attack¹². Also, Georgia's onslaught managed to turn a frozen conflict into a 'hot' international crisis of considerable magnitude in a matter of hours.

The Russian military reaction came swiftly and decisively and managed to secure the Abkhazian and South Ossetian territories by rebuffing and partially disabling Georgian military capabilities in a matter of days. Also, Russian forces took control of some critical areas and infrastructure in Georgia well outside the disputed territory. Russian Black Sea Fleet units deployed from Sevastopol to the Eastern part of the Black Sea to conduct a naval presence operation.

After five days of fighting Russian president Medvedev announced that Russian forces had accomplished their mission and would retreat in accordance with the cease-fire and six-point-plan brokered by French President Sarkozy between Russia and Georgia to pave the way for a political solution to the conflict.

So who achieved what?

President Saakashvili's decision to resolve the separatist issue by military force has failed and indicates a flawed appreciation of the situation and strategic, political and military misjudgement. The recklessness of Mr Saakashvili's military actions against Tskhinvali has not gone unnoticed in the West. As a result Georgia's much desired NATO membership may encounter considerable delay. Based on the false, rather naive and risky assumption that the U.S. and NATO would support Georgia in resolving the separatist conflict by whatever means, Mr. Saakashvili has thus completely misjudged Russia's reaction. The Russian military action and subsequent decision to recognize South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence have created a situation that will prove difficult to resolve by peace-

ful means, save for a Georgian recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Restoring confidence with the now alienated Abkhazians and South Ossetians also those living in Georgia proper will be another Georgian challenge. The Georgian people, in the meantime, would be well advised to elect another president soonest. Mr Saakashvili got it badly wrong and by his actions has disqualified himself as a responsible leader and a reliable NATO/EU partner.

From a military point of view the Russian military operation achieved its main objectives by routing the Georgian forces and securing South Ossetian and Abkhazian territory against possible Georgian follow-on attacks. A 1.400 death toll and a direct threat against Russian peacekeepers in the area left the Russians with few options for stopping the Georgian onslaught on Tskhinvali. By embarking on a military option, the Russians also deliberately chose to violate Georgian territorial integrity, a choice subsequently consolidated in the political arena on 26 August 2008 by recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent nations, a much more far-reaching measure than the military operation in Georgia.

From a Russian perspective Mr. Saakashvili's military operation must have been an ideal opportunity to settle a number of issues with Georgia, NATO, and the U.S., in particular. Russian-Georgian relations, over the years, had turned sour due to a number of incidents, mutual machinations and provocations. Deployed in Kavkaz 2008 the bulk of the Russian forces was in an excellent initial position to conduct a swift tit for tat operation against Georgia. To the West and NATO the message obviously consisted of three elements: Russia will not tolerate its citizens and troops abroad to be exposed to disproportionate violence, Russia will create facts on the ground if need be, and Russia is back as a power to be reckoned with. In other words Russian reactions are fed by a mix of frustration and recently regained self-confidence. Indeed Russia has created facts on the ground the West can do little about, a situation not unlike the one Russia and Serbia found themselves in after Kosovo's independence. Russia's course of action during the Georgian conflict may, however, backfire in the Chechnyan arena. The deployment of two Russian TU-160 'Blackjack' strategic bombers to Venezuela and the upcoming November 2008 deployment of the Russian Navy to the Caribbean thus may well be more of the same Russian tit-for-tat approach we have seen in Georgia, in this case addressed to the U.S., and in some western media already loosely referred to as the 'Putin doctrine'.

The Cold War revisited?

While Russia can hardly be blamed for safeguarding Russian peacekeeping troops and Russian citizens present on South Ossetia and Abkhazian soil, the troubling part of the Russian reaction is that it was in many ways as disproportionate as the Georgian action that triggered it, in that it did not stop short of neutralizing the Georgian armed forces as an effective fighting force. The destruction of the Georgian navy moored alongside in the port of Poti well clear of the conflict is a point in case. Both the Georgian and Russian operation bear the hallmarks of classical one-size-fits-all Soviet-style military operations. The Russian military operation and reaction thus seem to reveal Russia's utter frustration with perceived Western arrogance and blatant ignorance for Russia's interests, role

and significance. Also, the Russians are obviously fed up with Western 'democratism' urging Russia to impose democracy 'Western Style' regardless of whether or not other decisive elements required for the wellbeing and development of the country are in place¹³. What makes things worse is Russia's - arguably false - perception of renewed economic strength and - indeed - of being a superpower again. Yet, Russia's newly achieved wealth is heavily dependent on the export of hydrocarbons and commodities to Europe and - to a lesser extent - on its weapons and space industry. Russia's highest priority therefore should be to restore its manufacturing base and develop an economy fit to fully integrate in the global economy. Consequently, Russia would be well advised to refrain from using oil and gas as a weapon. President Clinton's *It's the economy stupid*, a message so obviously grasped by China, applies to Russia as well. Another obstruction towards improved relations with Russia is Russia's predominantly warped vision of NATO depicting the Alliance in Cold War terms, rather than the actual defense and security organization NATO has transformed into over the past decades.

A possible Russian fall back on traditional Soviet and Imperial Russian reaction patterns will arguably come at the price of isolation from an increasingly interdependent global economy. Such isolation will likely frustrate Russia's efforts to re-establish itself as a major power on a par with the other major powers in the emerging multi-polar world: the United States, Western Europe, Japan, China and India, a status for which the country, being a major nuclear power stretching over ten time zones, almost naturally qualifies. The current withdrawal of foreign investments and the falling exchange rate of the ruble have indeed already provided the writing on the wall¹⁴.

Cold War style reactions were also obvious in former Soviet republics and former Warsaw Pact nations. Ukraine, a country of which the current administration aspires to NATO membership, obviously got nervous and displayed an inclination to Soviet style Cold War reaction patterns. A case in point is Ukrainian president Yushenko's rather stern statements about Ukrainian military proficiency and capabilities underpinned with a military parade held in Kiev with the obvious aim to make clear that Ukraine will not be as easy a catch as was Georgia. Also, the Ukrainian government reiterated its intention to join NATO and confirmed that it will not allow the Russian Navy to stay in Sevastopol after the agreement on the use of Sevastopol naval base and naval facilities, brokered with the Russians in 1992, expires in 2017. Unless one believes that dealing with Medvedev's and Putin's Russia by definition requires a tough approach similar to what was required when dealing with Ukraine's and Russia's predecessor state, the Soviet Union, it is hard to see how the Ukrainian reaction would contribute to easing the already existing tensions between pro-Western and pro-Russian forces and factions so obviously present in both Ukraine and the Caucasian region.

Poland and the Baltic states as new NATO and EU members reacted to the Russian military operation as could be expected in view of their involuntary past as Soviet vassal state or Soviet Socialist Republics respectively. Confronted with Russian behavior reminiscent of the Soviet invasion of Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), they immediately backed Georgian president Saakashvili. What they apparently overlooked, how-



ever, was the fact that the majority of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian population welcomed the Russian tanks rather than hurling stones and Molotov cocktails at them. Poland and the U.S. quickly overcame Polish hesitance to allow U.S. missiles on Polish soil - a decision vehemently opposed by the Russians - and additionally negotiated some bilateral security and short range air-defense arrangement with the U.S.¹⁵. Ironically, an Iranian satellite launch a few days later provided the military rationale for what in essence was a political decision meant to press home the point that Russian attempts to redefine its near abroad at new NATO countries' expense will not stand a chance.

Old NATO's reactions also proceeded along well established Cold War practices. Although siding with a small country that is being bullied by a large neighbour is indeed in the best of NATO-traditions, there were few signs of a well-balanced reaction and an even handed approach. While Russia was condemned right away, the outrageous Georgian military course of action and its unacceptable consequences in terms of the death toll were hardly criticized by the West. Cold War rhetoric apparently had the upper hand during the course and the aftermath of the conflict. Certainly some of the Russian behaviour and politics justify such a reaction. The Soviet Union, however, is dead and gone and the Russian Federation is a very different country. Moreover, the West is well advised not to mistrust the Russian Federation upfront and to realize what progress has been made. The Russian Federation went through a miserable and humiliating period dominated by weak leadership, robber capitalism, endemic crime and corruption and a level of impoverishment which almost brought the country on the brink of total chaos¹⁶. That Vladimir Putin's government has been capable of restoring public security for Ivan Ivanovitch (the Russian Joe Sixpack) and managed to get the economy going again is no small feat and readily explains Mr Putin's domestic popularity and support. Security and gradual economic reforms rather than Western style democracy will prove to be a decisive factor for progress and stability.

Another issue the West ought to be cognizant of is that the Russian Federation, being the Soviet Union's successor state, deeply resents the post Cold War U.S. strive to establish a U.S. centered and dominated world order. While dormant during Russia's miserable nineties, a genuine Russian desire to restore its major role in the world was fully revived by U.S. post 9/11 pre-emptive policies, actions, machinations and obvious disastrous failures.

The Way Ahead

The West ought to think twice before imposing sanctions on Russia. The Soviet Union no longer exists and comparing the current Russian Federation with its predecessor state is wrong if only for the way the Russian and Western European economies are intertwined and interdependent. Also, Russia actively cooperates with a number of international organizations such as EU and NATO, just to mention a few. Moreover, a Russian middle class has started to emerge and an additional 150 + million Russian consumer market is an economic opportunity Western Europe can ill afford to ignore¹⁷. Allegations that Russia is inclined to use oil and gas as a weapon in order to blackmail Western Europe are not supported by facts. On the contrary, the Russian track record as an oil and

gas exporter, dating back to the dark days of the Cold War, is pretty good. The 1996/1997 controversy about gas prices with Ukraine was caused by the fact that Ukraine was still receiving gas for a fraction of the free market price, a situation that emerged from the post-Soviet efforts to establish the Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose economic confederation of former Soviet republics. Another reason for the West not to retrograde to Cold War thinking and actions is geopolitics. A new Cold War, or even a Cold Peace, would revive the spectre of a major European war, including nuclear war. NATO will have to make an increased effort to underline its vital role as a security and defence alliance promoting stability, not confrontation. While rebuffing any Russian attempts to hinder responsibly acting nations from becoming NATO-members and thus moving NATO eastwards, NATO and NATO-member states, the U.S. in particular, should refrain from pushing NATO eastwards. Also, it should be made clear that responsible balanced behavior is a prerequisite for any nation aspiring to become a NATO member and that no country is to be excluded from NATO membership off hand. Consequently, Ukraine and Georgia should not take a membership for granted at this point in time. Russia would be well advised to recognize the Alliance's true nature as a voluntary alliance of independent nations and an agent for stability and fighting hyper-terrorism, rather than domestically depicting it as a hostile force and a threat to Russia. At the same time Russian concerns and opinions about NATO such as expressed by former Soviet-President Mikhail Gorbachev, need to be addressed much more seriously, in particular by European NATO-partners in view of the many common interests shared with the Russian Federation¹⁸. Good relations with Russia - not to be established at any price - constitute an opportunity rather than a threat also when it comes to fighting Islamist ideology and hyper-terrorism. A new Cold War will not make the Long War against Islamist extremist ideologies go away, so let us stop the Cold War rhetoric and see how to resolve the outstanding controversies between Russia and the West.

Mutual ethnic cleansing by irregular forces will make it difficult to return to a status quo ante. The very fact that the Russian Federation has now recognized both breakaway areas as independent states by no means nullifies Georgian claims for territorial sovereignty. Conversely the Georgian claim for sovereignty over South Ossetia and Abkhazia is merely based on the fact that both separatist areas were part of the Georgian SSR. The West should clearly distance itself from Mr Saakashvilli's decision to regain control over South Ossetia by brutal force and at the expense of numerous lives. In any case, and difficult as it may be, a negotiated solution between Georgia, Russia and both break-away republics, if need be under international auspices, is arguably the only vehicle by which a lasting solution can be found for what has now become a conflict of (major) international dimensions. Now that Russia has cut the Gordian knot at the Caucasus by recognizing Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence, it may even be time for a bold move from the West by offering Georgia the prospect of NATO and EU membership at the price of recognizing South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence. ■

Endnotes

- 1) A small region in South Western Georgia, holding the status of an Autonomous Republic within Georgia and that of an ASSR during Soviet times.
- 2) U.S. Department of State. The United States and the South Ossetian Conflict, Fact Sheet <http://www.state.gov/pler/rls/fs/53721.htm>.
- 3) The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: In Search of Ways out Viacheslav A. Chirikba http://www.circassianworld.com/Conflict_Georgian_Abkhazian.html.
- 4) UNSCR 858 of 24 August 1993.
- 5) <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/services/cds/agreements/pdf/geol.pdf>.
- 6) The relations between the Abkhaz and the Georgians have been tense for decades. Historically, the Abkhaz attempted many times to separate from the Republic of Georgia. Most recently, in August 1990, the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet declared Abkhazia a sovereign republic of the Soviet Union independent of Georgia. This was immediately annulled by the Georgian Supreme Soviet. As a compromise for remaining in the Republic of Georgia, the Abkhaz were given disproportionate representation in the Supreme Council of Abkhazia. At that time, of the total population in Abkhazia of 540,000, only about 18 per cent were Abkhaz. The majority was Georgian (about 47 per cent), and others included Armenians (about 18 per cent) and Russians (about 13 per cent). <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/t-po/peace/unomig.html>.
By unanimously adopting resolution 1036 (1996), the Council also condemned the ethnic killings and continuing human rights violations committed in Abkhazia, Georgia, and called upon the Abkhaz side to ensure the safety of all persons in areas it controls. U.N. Press Release SC/6159 <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1996/19960112.sc6159.html>
Human Rights Watch Arms Project Vol 7 no. 7 March 1995 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/g/georgia/georgia953.pdf>
- 7) Under the supervision of representatives of the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States and United Nations observers, with the participation of representatives of the parties from the Kodori valley, the troops of the Republic of Georgia shall be withdrawn to their places of deployment beyond the frontiers of Abkhazia; A regular patrol of the peace-keeping force and international observers shall be organized concurrently in the Kodori valley; Art 2 d Agreement on a Cease-Fire and Separation of Forces, signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994.
- 8) Johnson's Russia List <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-157-38.cfm>.
The Russian-Georgian War was Preplanned in Moscow by Pavel Felgenhauer http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=427&issue_id=4591&article_id=2373314
- 9) According to the Georgian Defense Ministry spokesperson, Mindiya Arabuli, about 1,200 U.S. servicemen and 800 Georgians will train for three weeks at the Vaziani military base near the Georgian capital. Russia, Georgia Hold Military Exercises amidst Tensions by Kirill Bessonov, Moscow News N° 28 2008, 18 July 2008 <http://www.mnweekly.ru/news/20080718/55338376.html>
- 10) "We have evidence showing that Georgia used against South Ossetia tanks, artillery, air defense systems, MLRS and other weaponry delivered from 14 countries," Sergei Fridinsky said, adding that the majority of military equipment came from the U.S. and Ukraine. Russia says Georgia used weaponry from 14 states in conflict RIA Novosti <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080910/116687950.html>
Le Figaro: Mr. Prime Minister, in your interview to CNN on August 28th, you said there had been American soldiers standing behind Georgian troops. Have you found any proof of that information, which was only a hypothesis at the time of the interview? Putin: I wasn't talking about American soldiers. I was talking about American citizens. The fact that Georgia's army had been armed by our American partners is an established fact that nobody is going to dispute. The fact that American instructors had tried to train Georgia's army is also a truth that nobody questions. And I think even the former Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, a citizen of France, Mrs. Zurabishvili has publicly announced that. I said that, according to our intelligence, there had been American citizens in the war zone. I said that they had been within the security zone outlined by international agreements, and there were only three categories of people authorized to be in that zone: locals, peacekeepers, and OSCE observers. Putin: U.S. spoiled our relationship and should fix it Russia Today, September 13, 2008, 16:55 <http://www.russiatoday.com/news/news/30380>
- 11) Saakashvili lijkt zijn hand te hebben overspeeld by Michel Kriegers NRC Handelsblad, 11 Aug. 2008 http://www.nrc.nl/nieuwsthema/georgie/article1952759.ece/Saakasjvili_lijkt_zijn_hand_te_hebben_overspeeld
- 12) War in Georgia: Misreading Ossetia – Chronology Matters by Patrick Armstrong http://www.russiablog.org/2008/08/war_in_georgia_mis-reading_ossetia.php
- 13) What is oftentimes overlooked by Western politicians and opinion makers is that a similar observation can be made with regard to the People's Republic of China, a country with an increasing potential to become a role model for countries seeking rapid economic development without running the risk of putting their stability in jeopardy by a hasty introduction of Western style democracy.
- 14) The dispute between the countries "adds to bruised investor sentiment" in Russia and is "potentially damaging to Russia's external relations, particularly with the West," JPMorgan Chase & Co. wrote in a note to investors. "Clearly a war would not support investor confidence and would further fuel the debate about political risk." The ruble weakened as much as 1.3 percent against the dollar-euro basket and was at 29.7052 by 4:28 p.m. in MOSCOW, from 29.3585 yesterday. The basket mechanism was introduced as a way of limiting the impact of the ruble's fluctuations on the competitiveness of Russian exports. Ruble, Russian Stocks Fall as Putin Says Georgia 'War' Started Finchannel.com 11/08/2008 12:46 http://finchannel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17920&Itemid=1
- 15) However, Jerzy Szmajdzinski, Vice Speaker of the Polish Parliament from the Union of Democratic Leftist Forces and a former national defense minister, said on Monday that if the U.S. were to scrap its missile defense plan for Poland, "no one would be too upset." U.S. set for new Polish armed forces offer over missile shield RIA Novosti, 05/ 05/ 2008
"Our position has not changed," Donald Tusk told a news conference. "We will allow the shield on our territory only when the United States comes up with an offer that satisfies the Polish army's demands [for modernization]." Polish PM says no decision yet on U.S. missile shield RIA Novosti 13/ 05/ 2008.
Poland will only allow the United States to deploy a missile defense base in Poland if it can be shown that this will improve national security, the prime minister said on Friday. "The American shield will be deployed here only if it raises our security," Donald Tusk told a news conference given by the government. Polish PM says no U.S. missile shield unless it improves security RIA Novosti 23/ 05/ 2008 <http://en.rian.ru/>
- 16) Rather than expressing a desire to restore the Soviet Union, former president Vladimir Putin's oftentimes quoted statement regarding the Soviet Union's collapse refers to the situation Russians and the Russian Federation found themselves in after the USSR had ceased to exist. "First and foremost it is worth acknowledging that the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century," Putin said. "As for the Russian people, it became a genuine tragedy. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and countrymen found themselves beyond the fringes of Russian territory.
- 17) Economic prosperity for a growing middle class will likely stall and reverse the dramatic decline in Russian Federation birth-rates seen over the last two decades.
- 18) Gorbachev says NATO growth aimed at isolating Russia, RIA Novosti 08/ 09/ 2008.

